

THE WAR ON WASSEMEBI

Drawings by Oliver Kemp

BY ROY NORTON



"I Have Learned How to Forgive!"

THE War on Wassemebi, as we trappers and hunters called it, began, as do most wars, over something just a little bigger than nothing; but it threatened wholesale annihilation while it lasted, and imbroiled a country about as large as Servia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria combined. All attempts at arbitration failed, and the men

on both sides were well armed and quite well trained for their work. There was no hereditary hatred involved, and, like most wars, the leaders had been friends. The friends in this case were Dave Butler and Charley Amance, both of them young, both big, and both professional hunters and trappers who had drifted down across the line from Canada, where for some years they had followed our trade until they grew tired of Hudson Bay methods and thought they would try a change.

There was a wide sweep of country right up in the heart of the hills where for more than forty years old Ben Woodard, known to everybody for several hundred miles as "The Bear," had set his traplines; and, with his permission, they went in there to build their cabins, stick up their little shelters over the sixty or seventy miles they tramped, and do all those things which we who trap and hunt have to do in the way of blazing trails and so on. Old Ben was glad to have them for neighbors, and, inasmuch as Dave built his cabin only four miles away, and Charley found a spot less than seven miles distant that suited him, he felt that the country was getting quite civilized.

"This grand old State of Maine," he said to me one summer's night when, after a long day's paddling, I stopped at his big, crooked cabin, "is comin' inter her own. She's settlin' up like everything. When I fust came here there wan't nothin' but Injuns within forty mile. Look at her now! Why, the' must be all of twenty men livin' within that same forty! Yes, Siree! Bimeby they'll be more stores and traders, an'—say, mebbe the'll be a schoolhouse somewhere right around this here country before I go out!"

WE were sitting on the bench in front of his cabin at the time, looking out over the lake and watching the red of sunset fade into purple over the western mountains. A loon away out on the water was complaining because his day's catch had been small, and somewhere in the woods back of us a lynx screamed once or twice to give warning that his night's work had begun. Out around a turn where the cedar trees leaned over the lake's edge a canoe shot into sight and came toward us, its wake rippling red and blue as if the waters protested. The Bear strained his eyes, and then gesticulated with his pipe.

"I guess that might be that young feller Dave a comin' now," he said. "He's a sociable sort, an' comes to see me right often."

I thus had my first view of Dave Butler, and I could not but admire his skill. He waved his paddle and shouted as he came near the log float in front of Ben's cabin, brought the canoe up as gently as a wind-blown leaf, caught it in his hands, lifted it out on the beach, and came toward us. He was a big, medium-sized man. By that I mean that he looked just like anyone else until you happened to stand up alongside him, to discover that he was really something over six feet, but so well built that you hadn't noticed it. He had a smile, and a way of shaking hands, that made you like him.

"So you're Mathews, are you?" he said to me. "I'm glad to meet you. Heard quite a lot about you. Whenever you're down my way any time, make yourself at home if I'm in or out. Windy Point, you know. Just got my cabin done. Canada Charley has been helping me."

And then he launched, in short sentences, into commendation of Charley Amance, and one might know that he regarded Canada Charley as one of the finest hunters, trappers, and men that ever existed.

I MET Canada Charley two days later at the trader's store, some forty miles farther south. He too was a big fellow, a quiet, black-haired, black-eyed man, who looked you squarely in the eyes. For quite awhile I thought he had no tongue. There were two or three timber cruisers lounging around, and two or three other trappers that I knew, and the usual half-dozen St. Francis Indians. The trader had a phonograph, the first one we had ever heard, one of that kind you don't see any more, which you turned by hand. We sat and

smoked and listened to it a long time, and then, as if his tongue had loosened, Canada Charley began to talk to me.

I found the subject on which he was eloquent. It was that concerning the virtues of Dave Butler. To listen to him you would be convinced that Dave Butler was probably the best hunter and trapper, the finest, most sober man, that ever drew breath on the border.

And as I paddled homeward the next day I kept thinking about the fine, brotherly friendship of those two young fellows, and regretting somewhat that I was no longer young, with youth's enthusiasms, as they were.

I TOLD Ben about it when I made his place for a night's stop. Somehow, as we talked, I fancied that he too felt that same envy. There were two reasons why he should,—one being that he had once been young, and the other that he had sentiment. There were indications of it around his cabin, which was a queer old structure, rambling into lean-tos and additions, with many fireplaces, with heads and ornaments on the beams and log walls, with some pelts on the floor, and with a garden behind and flowers in front.

There was a tradition that once, before any of us came into the country, he had been happy there with a wife who afterward died when he was out on his trap line working over that fifty or sixty miles of snow-laden forest when the mercury was low. Mary, her name was. I heard him mention her once or twice—with tears. The tradition said that before he married her, and had been a swift-water man away down lower in the State, he had been a fighting, swearing "bully boy," ready to go to the death and in recklessness; but that she changed him. He was Young Ben then, and gave her all he had to give. In return she gave him sobriety, and religion, and love, and left him to grow more kindly and to look forward on life as something to be lived out according to the ideals she had implanted until he could step across its black border and again take her in his arms.

"Sometimes," he said to me this night, "I sort of feel I've made a mistake. I've made money, more'n I need; but I ain't had no chance to make many friends. Sometimes, ten or twenty years ago, I used to think about it; but, you see, I couldn't leave here when the time came. 'Twas all I had left of her,—just this cabin, and them flowerbeds, and the things she'd made with her own hands."

I WAS somewhat surprised when, after the snow had fallen and the busy season started, I learned that these two friends had fallen out. Another man told me of it.

According to him there had been a pretty fair agreement between the two friends about where each man's territory was to run. They marked it off the way we have always done, looking out at a big peak and agreeing that neither man should cross the line to set his traps. Then, one day, when they had not seen each other for a month, Dave went up to look over his ground for game signs, and found a trap. There was nothing in it; but he followed the trail of snowshoes, and saw they led to another, and yet another trap. In the last one was a blue fox.

That may not sound much to you; but if you've ever been out where the game was running shy, and have suddenly come to a trap with a few hundred dollars lashing around in it, you would understand what that means. Dave stood won-

dering whose traps those could be, and then looked off through an opening in the forest. The peak that was the dividing line, as he understood it, was due west. Due east was the lake. Whoever set that line of traps was on his territory, as he located it.

Dave knocked the fox on the head, loosened the trap, and scrawled a note. It read:

This trap line is on my ground. I have taken a blue fox from it. Whoever set these traps can come to my cabin on Windy Point and get it. Please remove the traps and keep off.

NOW, if Charley had come to that trap line first, and gone to Dave's, it is probable there would have been no trouble; but, as bad luck would have it, another trapper, named Kilgore, heading for the lake en route to the trader's post with a timber cruiser, found it, and Kilgore was a troublemaker and a talker. He met Charley a few miles farther on, and met him when he was in a bad mood, inasmuch as he was tired to the point where he was about ready to make a camp in the snow, and in hard luck, inasmuch as not a trap of his long line had yielded a dollar's worth of fur. Kilgore said just enough to Charley to make the latter angry with him, the whole world, and Dave. And in this mood he abruptly cut across toward Dave's cabin. The distance was not sufficient to calm his temper.

He found Dave brooding over an unsuccessful run, and staring at a blue fox pelt that represented a good start toward a season's work. It was as if the devil had baited traps to kill friendship. In any other circumstances those two men would have laughed it off and flipped a shilling to decide which one was to keep the pelt; but now they made a bad start, both lost temper, and they quarreled over whether that trap line was on one man's ground or the other's, each positive of his rights. It ended when Dave asserted that unless the traps were taken out of that gulch he would throw them out, and in Canada Charley's retorting that if they were thrown out he would reset them in the same places.

WHEN Dave arrived at the trading post the next day he found several other trappers from the other direction loafing there, three or four cruisers, and Kilgore. The latter had, as usual, talked. And when he talked it was always colored a trifle for the sake of romance, and to make his tale entertaining. The cruisers took it all as a joke. So when Dave arrived he was a subject for lively interest on the part of the trappers.

"Hello! Ran you out, did he?" asked the cruiser who had read the note, and the other timber men laughed.

Naturally, when a man has done nearly fifty miles on snowshoes with the mercury ten or twenty below zero, he is not in a jesting mood. Dave said nothing.

"The 'ain't no man could run me off'n my ground!" asserted a trapper who knew nothing whatever of the dispute save the colored account given by Kilgore. "Looks to me like any man with sand in his craw'd stick if he had to gyard his line with a thirty-thirty."

"I haven't run away, and I don't intend to!" asserted Dave hotly. "Perhaps you'd like to try my sand?"

Then they all took a hand in the dispute, and it lasted until late bedtime.

Dave rose about half ill the next day, and along toward evening the trader advised him to take a stiff drink of brandy to warm him up. Dave was a teetotaler, and the poison given him went to his head. He bought a bottle of it and treated. It went to the heads of the others also, and it was just when they were in this heated state that Canada Charley, tired and trail worn,

opened the door and stood with his back against it.

For an instant no one spoke, and then the disturber, Kilgore, sneered and said:

"Looks as if this Canada Charley is after you to trim you proper and salt your pelt, Dave!"

Before poor Charley could grow accustomed to the light, understand the situation, or set his snowshoes against the wall, so quickly did it all happen, Dave had growled an insult, and told Kilgore that the man didn't live who could either salt his pelt or invade his ground; also, incidentally, that if Kilgore cherished his comeliness he had better close his trap. But the damage was done. Charley, not knowing that Kilgore had read the note, thought that Dave must have told the story of the trap line, and resented it. He knew nothing of the poisonous bottle that had been passed around; but he sensed hostility. Being a man of slow speech, he did not reply; but announced to the trader that he had come in for supplies and would leave early the next morning, because he wanted to set another trap line.

"I suppose," hazarded Kilgore, much the worse for drink, and insinuatingly, "that you've quit tryin' to steal another man's ground?"

Without an instant's hesitation Canada Charley plunged through the smoke clouds of the post and struck Kilgore, who went back and landed against a cruiser. He struck again, and Kilgore collapsed, like a sack of sawdust over the woodbox. Dave, knowing the terrible strength of his former friend, and with nothing but good intentions, interfered lest Kilgore be killed; but Charley, thinking he was coming to take the fallen Kilgore's part, struck Dave. The latter, half blinded by the blow, struck back. The cruiser caught a side blow, and thought it had been inflicted by the trader, who had come to bring peace; so he hit the trader. The trader promptly hit back.

There were nearly a dozen men in the room, and five minutes later, when there was a mutual pause for

breath, there was not a man whose face, clothing, or fists did not prove that he had been a participant in the fight. Also any of those who had previously taken no side in the dispute, and really did not care which side won, had now become active and aggressive partisans. They began to shake fists at one another, and the battle would have been resumed in an instant if the trader had not leaped out to the middle of the floor and asserted himself.

"Stop!" he shouted. "You stop this fighting in my place, or anywhere around it! I won't have it! I'm the only officer of the law in this country, and I'll arrest or kill any man that goes any further with it! That goes!"

THERE was no reconciliation the next morning.

Men who had been in the habit of bidding one another goodby, and exchanging that timeworn but always good wish, "Hope they come your way," turned and trudged grimly and silently off into the forest. And grimly and silently Canada Charley took the trail with a huge pack on his back; while, not out of sight, and following, came the man with whom for years he had been friends.

I think that Charley proved the better man of the two; for after he made his cabin that night, and threw his pack on the floor, and lighted his fire, and cooked his meal, he again slipped his tired feet into his snow thongs and took out over the white. He went directly to old Ben's cabin, and found the latter in bed. In response to Charley's insistent knocking, old Ben crawled out and opened the door.

"What's up?" he said. "Must be somethin' pretty gosh-awful bad."

Charley went over in front of the fireplace and pulled off his mittens, cap, and mackinaw, before he answered, and The Bear kicked the back log and started the fire into a blaze.

"Ben," Charley said in a low, worried voice, "I've come to you for advice."

Then he sat down and told that wise old man the whole story. And he didn't spare himself. The Bear listened quietly, and sensed that Canada Charley was heartsick over the loss of a friend, but was also that type of man who will fight grimly for what he considers a just cause. He scarcely knew what to advise, and for a long time sat and stared at the blazing log in the big stone fireplace, now and then shifting his glance, as was his habit, upward toward the faded picture above it,—the face of the wife who, still young and smiling, had left him. With prodigious gravity he knocked the ashes from his pipe and spoke.

"It looks to me," he said, "as if you two boys are both makin' mistakes. I sort of think that row down at the trader's was uncalled for. And I sort of think you agree. Huh?"

Charley was certain of it.

"And that you want to be friends with Dave again? Huh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I orter go over my nearest line tomorrow; but I won't. I'll hustle over and see Dave fust thing in the mornin', because 'tain't likely he'll be startin' out tomorrow. Now you just go to bed and leave it to me."

When Charley got up the next morning, long before the stars had faded out of the cold northern sky, The Bear had gone; but for once old Ben's meditation was to prove unavailing. He got to Dave's cabin by daylight, and found him in and ill tempered. Embittered by the fight, he insisted on two things,—that Charley owed him an apology, and that he should take his traps away from the disputed line. Finally he agreed to remove his own traps if Charley apologized, because he too was ashamed of himself, convinced that the right was on his side, and only wanting an excuse to square himself in the eyes of those whom Kilgore had aroused to partizanship. So The Bear's trip was about as bad as useless.

When he went back across the lake Charley was waiting for him, and surmised that the dispute was not ended. He said he would have been willing to move the trap line, but wouldn't apologize, because it should have been the other way about; so that now the traps would stay there, if he had to use a rifle to keep them on the ground. He went away in a huff, with The Bear watching him out of sight in the short light of the winter afternoon, and shaking a sorrowful head.

AND Charley didn't remove the traps. Yet, as a concession, neither did he bait them, and there they stretched away through the forest with its winter snow, useless and idle. Dave slipped over and saw them, tore one up to cast it aside or hang it in a tree, and then, seeing that it was not set or baited, put it back, and thereafter kept away from that side of his ground.

Down at the post, when men came in, they fell to arguing, each for the man he believed right. There were a dozen fist fights and one stabbing between the middle of November and the first week in December, and men who had been on speaking terms quit talking when they met—and the war was on. The law of the wilderness had been broken, and, because it was the only law they knew, they were ready to die for its retention.

Now and then Dave and Charley saw each other at a distance; but neither made a friendly overture. Once they met at Ben's house, and the old man tried to reconcile them, with the result that they both left rather than pass a night under the same roof.

As if to chasten the spirits of all of us on the Wasemebi that year, the Lord sent the game elsewhere. What with the scarcity of fur-bearing animals, and the neglect of the lines, all men being more interested in making trips to the post to debate the rights and wrongs of this quarrel, it was the poorest early season in the

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WHAT THE PUBLIC REALLY WANTS

Continued from page 6

came to my lips automatically, and had begun to lose meaning to my brain.

"Do you catch what I mean? I wasn't parrothe in the giving of the lines, for there were tonal differences, shades of accent, pauses; but I had become phonographic. Wind me up, and the same inflections of voice, breaks in sentences, quavers, that were part of me last night would be repeat record for tonight. Then, all of a sudden on certain nights, something that was in that audience, some wave of understanding, something reaching out to me, telepathic, indefinable, would make its presence felt—and the words I had been speaking for nights in the same automatic way took on their rightful meaning again. And those were the nights that I made old Herr Von Barwig live! The credit was not mine. It belonged to the people out front. They did something to me," he shivered imperceptibly, "I don't know what it was."

Again the mineral water. Then, "I've tried experimenting with my audiences. Remember the big scene in 'The Music Master' when Barwig claims his daughter from her foster father? Well, that scene, like others in the long, long months I played it, came along in an automatic sort of way, and I merely went through it as a man would who had been doing the same thing over and over and over again. Of course that's how it was to me. To the audience it was vastly different, because it was new to it. And the scene never failed of tremendous applause, of long continued hand clapping and of numerous curtain calls. It's a scene, if you remember, that gets pretty close to the heartstrings. Well, I experimented with my audience, as I mentioned before. On certain occasions, when that something took hold of me from the people in front, and lifted me up, up, up, I have cried real tears of anguish in that big scene, and have had them roll down my face and splash onto my hands. And yet the applause was no heartier, no more spontaneous, no longer

drawn out, than when the same scene was played almost automatically by me.

"How do you explain it?" Then, without waiting for an answer, he did the explaining. "Here's the reason in a nutshell. Acting should always be suggestive: never photographic. What you suggest, if your art is deep enough and subtle enough, your audience feels. Being photographic is shedding real tears; being suggestive is making your audience shed them. The finest photographic reproduction of, say, a Corot landscape, may reproduce to its tiniest detail every leaf on every tree; but it misses the soul that Corot painted into the picture. You can't photograph that."

WHAT a beautiful scene that was in 'The Music Master'! he said reflectively. "Do you know, it's the beautiful in the theater that obtains, after all? The public will come, year after year and time without end, to see the simple, pure drama. Other plays have their time and pass and are forgotten; but there's always a place, and a public too, for the simple drama. Really it's so primitive and so simple it's almost punk—which may not be very good English but is mighty expressive.

"Look at 'The Homestead' and 'Shore Acres' and 'Way Down East' and 'Rip Van Winkle.' Year after year, year after year, they linger with us, making their simple, direct appeal to our emotions, and never failing to grip us and tug at our hearts. No sex problems, no high finance questions, no philosophic doctrines, aired: just an ordinary, everyday, simple story, told in a simple way. And we sit down and listen with the rapt attention of the child hearing a fairy tale at its mother's knee.

"How the public loves the simple drama—and always will love it! Yes," and he smiled almost apologetically, "and I love it too!"

Then the waiter came and took the mineral water away.

THE WAR ON WASSEMEBI

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history of the country. It seemed as if every man was on one side or the other, save old Ben, who merely sat and grieved. And then, as if wearied by this foolish quarrel, Fate took a hand in this queer game.

IT was quite dark one night when Canada Charley, who had kept himself like a hermit for weeks, grew lonesome for someone to talk to, and came for a visit to The Bear. He pushed the door open and stumbled in. The room was dark. The fire had gone out in the fireplace long before, and the musty chilliness of winter had stolen down through the bleak, cold chimney. He listened, and from the other room came a moaning noise. On the bed, muttering, delirious, glassy eyed, lay old Ben Woodard, with white fingers twisted into his white beard, and rolling his head on his pillow.

Charley hurried out, and soon had the big fireplace roaring. He filled the kettle with chunks of ice and hung it on the crane, and then went back in and stood beside Ben, who did not know him, and breathed with great difficulty. Charley stood there trying to think what the illness could be, when he felt a rush of cold air, and heard the soft pat-pat of moccasins. He looked round, and in the doorway between the rooms stood Dave, glowering, and questioning, and disturbed.

"He's sick, Ben is," said Charley, after staring at Dave for a full half-minute. "He's bad sick. I just come in and found him—like this."

It was the first word they had exchanged that winter. Dave's face lost its scowl, and took on a look of solicitude. He tiptoed over, stood beside Charley, and bent above the bed.

"What do you s'pose it is?" he whispered. "I'll be hanged if I know! Only it's bad! He wheezes right hard, don't he?"

Dave nodded, took off his cap, and ran his fingers through his hair.

"Reckon he's goin'?" he whispered; but whatever answer Canada Charley might have made was drowned by a voice that rose, querulous and thin, from the bed.

"An' you'll read it to me, Mary, jest as you allus have when I was wrong—that part that says—something about forgive as ye hope for forgiveness?"

They didn't dare look at each other, those

two enemies who had been friends, as the voice settled and died away to mumbled sentences and half articulate whispers. They tiptoed out again in that same stealthy way, and closed the door behind them, foolishly fearful lest they disturb the vagaries of that soul wandering in the maze of the borderland.

The voice rose shrill and high to follow them through the barrier. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen—and the Book says that he who loveth God must love his brother also!"

"Dave," Charley said, abruptly turning toward his companion, and facing him in the light from the fireplace, his strong features set and calm, "you and I aren't friends any more; but we both like The Bear. Ben's goin' out unless somethin's done for him almighty quick. You've said this country wa'n't big enough to hold us both. It ain't. But it's got to hold us both until The Bear is better or worse."

Dave nodded his head and scowled at the blaze.

"One of us has got to go and bring a doctor. It's full fifty miles to the nearest one—over at MacGill's. One of us must start tonight. The other must stay here. I'm goin'."

A sudden flare, softened, impetuous, admiring, lighted Dave's somber eyes, and he lifted his head.

"You're all right in everything, except one. I'm goin'."

"No, I don't think you are," was Canada's response. "I—I—" his voice shook a little as if something had wrenched him—"I used to be a little better than you on the shoes, Dave. It's because I'm not so heavy. The snow may be light over the divide."

If Dave felt any call of that old friendship, he did not show it. And if he had, it would not have been observed; for suddenly both were staring away from each other and into the fire. Dave cleared his throat roughly, and said with an assumption of gruffness:

"No! That ain't the way to decide. We flip a coin. Heads, you go and I stay; tails, the other way about."

He slipped his hand into his pocket and brought out a battered old pocket piece. The coin flew up and fell on the floor. Both bent over it. Both straightened, and Char-

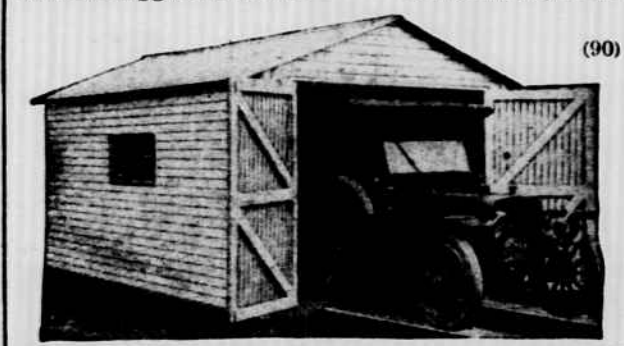
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Big Ben



The Sunrises' Club of Successful Men.

EVERY morning—about the land—there is a bunch of get-there men who are off the mattress at the first crack of a bell.

They swing down to their work with cheek aglow—with grit afresh—with eye alight—they're the Sunrises' Club of Successful Men, most are acquainted with Big Ben.

They've left it to him to get them up in the world—and he's done it so loyally, so cheerfully,

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Big Ben's the clock for get-there men. He stands 7 inches tall, massive, well-poised, triple plated. He is easy to read, easy to wind, and pleasing to hear.

He calls just when you want and either way you want, *steadily for 5 minutes or intermittently for 10.*—He's two good clocks in one, a dandy alarm to wake up with, a dandy clock to tell time all day by.

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ley pulled the lapels of his fur cap down over his ears and reached for his mackinaw coat. Heads had decided that he was to take the ordeal. Neither said a word until he stood with his hand on the door latch.

"I'll be back by day after tomorrow morning," he said quietly. "If I'm not, you'll understand, and then it'll be your turn to try."

Dave nodded slowly. "Yes," he replied, "if you're not back by then, I'll know that you—" and turned away.

The door opened to admit the sullen moan of the coming storm, the deathly chill of the air, and the harsh, weaving blackness of the night. It closed again abruptly. For an instant Dave stood there, his face twisting, his hands clenching, his breast heaving, and then made a dash for the door. He jerked it open, and, heedless of disturbing the sick man, shouted:

"Charley! Oh, Charley! Goodby, Boy! Goodby!"

Only the roar of the storm and the pines answered, and they seemed bent on drowning that longing cry of old friendship aroused, that shriek of regret. Canada Charley had gone. Dave went back into the room where old Ben lay, to do what he could, and to listen to the babbling of the delirious voice, and to brood.

OUR northern blizzards aren't easy to face, believe me! They don't come often; but when they do Death races in their folds. I've found animals frozen in their coverts. I've fought for shelter with them, in that truce of desperation. And so, into this, lithe and strong and traveling by instinct, and shielding himself as best he could, or panting wearily when the wind gained the best of it, plunged Canada Charley. Sometimes he feared he had lost his way, which led him for more than twenty miles along the lake, after which he hoped to find the old trappers' trail that led up toward the tops of the hills. He lost an hour fumbling along the beach at the point where he thought it should begin, and then found it and stumbled along in the woods where the big trees sheltered him somewhat, but where drifts climbed up to impede, and covered brush sprang to catch his snowshoes.

And so, shortly before daybreak, he was still stumbling forward, chilled, tired, and yet determined. He knew that a hunter's cache would supply him breakfast and a leanto shelter, and fairly fell into this little log storehouse. It was hard work to keep from dozing in that warmth; but he resolutely forced himself out into the murky dawn to make the last twenty miles of his run. He went stronger, after that pause and the food, and it was easier, now that he could see the little lane through the woods, instead of stumbling from it at intervals, as he had done through the night.

And so it was that at eleven o'clock of that ugly day a man, ice coated round the face where his breath had congealed, and ice coated over his mackinaw where the heat of his body had worked outward, trudged doggedly into MacGill's, where a little village had sprung up around the headquarters of the big lumber company. He went into the biggest store, where the post-office was situated, and the crowd of men that was hibernating there during the storm looked at him curiously. Quick to recognize the distress signs of travel, they nudged one another; for here was a man who had escaped from the white death.

Charley lost no time in talking to them, but addressed the man behind the counter. "Where can I find the doctor's shop?" he asked.

"Cabin up at the funder end of the street. Can't miss it."

Without a word Charley turned and walked out. The tin sign hanging from the cabin displayed, in new gilt letters, the legend, "Doctor Henry Thorne." Canada Charley pushed the door open and entered without ceremony. The place was like a diminutive drugstore, and a small, red-haired, youngish man, with thick glasses, turned and looked at him inquiringly.

"Are you the doctor?" asked Canada Charley, and then without waiting for an answer went on, "I've come to get you to go with me just as quick as you can get ready."

"What is the case?" the doctor asked, knowing the impetuosity of the larger number of people. "If it isn't anything pretty urgent, I don't care to go out in this storm."

"I don't know what ails him. He's delirious, anyhow. Like as not he'll die if we don't hurry, because he's getting along in years."

The doctor took off his glasses and reached for his coat and medicine chest, and as he



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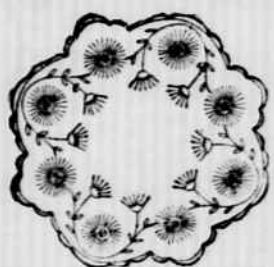
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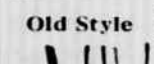
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did so remarked casually, "What's his name? Where is he?"

"It's old Ben Woodard, and he's up near the head of Wassemehi!"

The doctor stopped with one arm half-way in the sleeve of his coat. "Ben Woodard? I've heard of him. Wassemehi? Good Lord, Man! That's forty or fifty miles from here, isn't it?"

Canada Charley nodded his head, and something in his appearance made the doctor step closer, replace his glasses, and look at him critically.

"You just got here, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"How long have you been hiking through this storm?"

"Since early evenin' yesterday."

The doctor gave a long whistling note of surprise. "And you're ready to start back and buck the storm for forty miles again, without any rest, for this friend of yours?" he asked, his tone expressing great admiration.

"Certainly."

"Well, you'll attempt nothing of the sort!" snapped the doctor. "Why, it would kill you! We'd never get there. You've got to have some rest. I like your nerve, and just because you've got it I'll go; but I'll be hanged if I'd do it if the case was any different. I'm not so husky as I have been. This trip may get me; but I'll go just the same. Now you go in the back room there, take off your clothes, and lie down on my bed until I call you. We'll move tomorrow."

"Nope! We go sooner'n that," Charley asserted, and then took to pleading, and the best the doctor could do was to get him to promise to sleep four hours, and have a meal before they started.

"It must be somethin' mighty serious to call Doc and that feller out into the trail such a evenin' as this," was the comment of the two or three men who saw them start away in the dusk, with Canada Charley impatiently in the lead and the doctor's case strapped to his back.

IT was dark almost before the first six miles had been conquered. This time the night going was easier; for the doctor had provided one of those oldtime bullseye lanterns that we later used when we wanted to "shine" moose or deer. The wind had abated a little when they made their start; but now, even there in the great forest, they could hear its upper moan increasing, and an icy wave seemed to sweep down through the trees, in and out among the bare trunks, like wolves gathering for the kill. The path of light, tiny and struggling, showed occasional whirls of snow flying like chill ghosts through the night across the trail. The drifts were soft in places, and their snowshoes sank with wearying regularity, testing nerve, endurance, and patience to the limit.

The wind was in their faces as they made the turn on the divide and started downward. It now seemed to fill all gullies, to invade all coves, and to rage in every spot where they had hoped for a lull. Charley turned his back to it for an instant, utterly exhausted by its persistent enmity, to discover that the little doctor had lagged behind many paces and was coming forward with dogged effort.

"Come on, Doc," he croaked encouragingly, and his voice barely lifted above the whining of the forest and the storm. "Come on. About a mile more, and there's the cache. We'll have some hot tea there."

But, although the doctor was gamely struggling, and attempted to respond, his snowshoes were barely clearing themselves as he came on. Canada walked more slowly, looking back every minute lest his companion succumb to the desire for rest that is fatal when the mercury is frozen. At the cabin the doctor lunged in and threw himself on the old bunk, heedless of little drifts of snow that had filtered through cranny, chinking, and crack, while Canada Charley hastened to fill the little tin stove with birch bark and start it into a blaze. The cabin responded with quick, generous heat, and he melted snow and made the tea. When he looked at the doctor the latter had fallen asleep.

"Most in," thought Charley. "Wish we could stay here a few hours. Nope, 'twon't do. Got to get him through somehow. If I lose any time, Ben's a goner." And then, aloud, "Hey, Doc! Here's some fine hot tea. Get it in you."

If he had thought that he would be compelled to plead with the little doctor from MacGill's he was mistaken; for no sooner had the latter gulped a quart of the hot tea than he insisted on starting again, and Charley's heart glowed with admiration for such grit.

AGAIN they were out in the night, plunging forward desperately on their errand. For awhile it seemed to Canada Charley

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that the doctor was going the stronger of the two, and he had time to think of the increasing stiffness of his own seasoned limbs. He began to wonder if he could last to the finish, and his mind was so tired that he failed to think of the doctor for a time; then he was recalled by a low moan borne to him from behind. He whirled and looked backward. The little doctor was staggering drunkenly on his feet, with his hands to his face. Charley threw the light on him.

"Doc," he shouted, "your face is frosted! Rub snow on it, quick!"

As the doctor's movements did not suit him, Charley pulled off his own mittens there in the icy cold, dug his fingers into the snow, and briskly rubbed it over the physician's face until the latter struck at him in anger.

"Want to skin me?" he demanded savagely.

The big trapper smiled to himself, dodged out of the path of fury, and began pulling on his mittens. Anger was the best remedy in the world for threatened freezing. He recovered the lantern from a snow bank, and all the time the doctor used language that was scarcely professional.

Once more they struck briskly out; but the worst part of the journey, in so far as the cold was concerned, lay ahead of them, and Canada Charley dared not think of what might happen on that wide, windswept space. He knew that once out of the forest the fine snow, mere ice particles, would cut as remorselessly as a torturer's knife. They came to it at last, and he halted and faced his companion.

"Doc," he shouted, "do you think I'd better stop here and try to make a little windbreak and a fire? Can you make it? Pretty tough goin'."

"Go ahead!" snarled Dr. Thorne.

HE turned and plunged out into the full fury of the blizzard, his woodman's sense of direction his only guide, and felt the storm leap and tear at him as if it had gathered itself for this final charge. He turned sideways to it and linked his arm through the doctor's, desperately concluding that if the exhausted little man was to fall he would at least fall with him and know where he was. Once separated in that fury, he would never again be able to find him. The first five miles were fought foot by foot; the second five by inches; and the third found him half carrying the doctor, who reeled at his side, and counting the steps. Now he began desperately to shriek oaths, prayers, and words of encouragement.

"You little quitter!" he would rasp out. "Where's your nerve?" Or again, "Doc! Oh, Doc! Don't lay down on me now. We're almost there. For God's sake, Man, keep on tryin'! Old Ben needs us. Doc! We've got to keep a goin'!"

Once or twice his own steps lagged, and that terrible whisper of soft, alluring Death penetrated his consciousness, asking him to rest for just a moment. Just a moment—no more! He might have yielded, at that, and considered the struggle for self preservation a useless effort, had not the double responsibility for life hammered itself dully through his brain. There was not only Ben, but the doctor, to be thought of now. If it wasn't for them—

The doctor fell and did not rise. In his fall he pulled Canada Charley over with him, and for an instant they sprawled on the frozen snow, which whooped and rushed forward instantly to weave its shroud; but up from the black spots on its surface painfully rose one man, who struck, kicked, and dragged desperately at the one who lay inert. Again they made their way by inches, and again the doctor, valiant to the last, toppled over, and as Charley bent above him mumbled sleepily, "Go on! Leave me be! Take the chest and—I'm all in!"

To Dr. Thorne this unbreakable man above him had become a tormentor, a devil of ingenuity, an enemy; for he beat him, cursed him through frosted lips, and jerked him to his feet once more to attempt that endless march that led to nowhere save another fearful stretch of weary waste. The day was breaking unheeded; for it was merely filled with white whirlwinds of snow, into which they must travel through an eternity. They fell more frequently, and now at intervals the doctor realized that he was being carried by something that seemed to pitch and stagger and stumble in its progress, something that sobbed and moaned and swore.

SOMETHING pitched against the door of the cabin where Dave tramped backward and forward listening to the feeble tones that came from the inner room. It pitched softly, as a dead weight, sounding scarcely louder than the blow of a storm-driven bird against a windowpane.

Dave listened a moment, then sprang to

the door and jerked it open. Into the room from where it had sprawled on the threshold toppled a queer form, and, stooping over, Dave saw that it was a man carrying another on his back, and that both were unconscious. And, strangely enough, it was the one beneath who seemed dead. He dragged them in and slammed the door, and sprang for a bottle on the shelf; but one, at least, did not respond, and with his own hands Dave stripped the clothing from his enemy and chafed his frosted extremities, leaving the little doctor to effect his own recovery.

CANADA CHARLEY came to his senses, and for a long time stared at an unfamiliar windowpane through which a clear, wintry sunlight streamed, then down at his hands, which were oddly bandaged. He sat up and thrust his feet clumsily from beneath the blankets to dangle beside the bed. He studied them; for some of the toes were bandaged, even as his fingers. He stood on them, and they pained him. He remembered it all now, up to that moment when he had crawled on knees and one hand, with the little doctor on his back, through that last stretch of snow leading from the beach up to the cabin door. But the remainder was a blank. He recalled that he had finally surrendered and given up, just as the door, which had malevolently kept receding, had been within reach. He wondered if he had carried a dead man to the cabin of the dying Ben Woodard; if Ben had left for all time; if Dave was there. It was very bewildering! He would go outside and find out.

THE big main room was empty; but from the one behind came voices, and one was jubilant. It was the doctor's.

"Dave, he'll make it! Pneumonia has a crisis on the tenth day. He's all right! We win!"

Canada Charley hobbled on into the room and stood at the foot of The Bear's bed, clinging to the footboard to stay that reeling of the world. The doctor turned toward him a swollen, cracked face, where the frost had left its brand of the Northland.

"You—you—" he began in astonishment; but a voice from the bed, sane and yet weak, interrupted.

"What date is this?" it demanded with trembling insistence.

The doctor turned toward him. "This," he answered softly, "is Thursday, Ben, and I've been here two days; but you owe it to Charley and Dave that you're able to know it. You've been sick about ten days."

There was a long silence, while the three men watched him.

"Then," said the weak voice, still insistently, "if it's Thursday, and I've been sick as long as that, it must be the fifteenth of the month, ain't it?"

The doctor consulted a book in his pocket. "You are correct," he said. "It is the fifteenth."

The Bear's white, thin fingers came together before him on the coverlet, and he closed his eyes. His lips moved noiselessly, as if in prayer—perhaps he was praying. Then, after a minute or two he spoke, so softly that had the wind been crooning without it would have drowned his voice:

"It was on the fifteenth of this month, all those years ago, that she left me. And yet I am spared like a ripe old sheaf of wheat, forgotten in the field. And I wouldn't be unhappy to die, and I'm not unhappy to live, because there is some good left for me to do. I have no enemies. I have learned how to forgive. The Best Book says, 'He that loveth not his brother abideth in death'; so I live."

The sunlight suddenly shifted until it leaped through the window in the room, and fell upon and glorified his face until it was more benevolent, and kindly, and old, than ever before. He opened his eyes, and they were filled with tears. The three men in the room leaned forward awkwardly, as if to comfort him.

"Boys," he said weakly, "I'm tryin'; but I can't be happy, unless—unless you, Dave, will shake hands with Charley."

"And I can't either!" roared the big trapper as he lunged round the end of the bed.

THE little doctor, ignorant of the War on Wassamebi, stood open mouthed and speculated in a haze, when he saw Dave Butler, the unemotional, abruptly clasp his huge arms round Canada Charley and hug him as if he were a brother. Then he looked back, to discover that The Bear's eyes were shut and overflowing, and that a smile of contentment was on his fine old face.

And so, as I explain, ended the war on Wassamebi, although neither the little doctor nor old Ben Woodard The Bear ever took any credit for it in after years, and it was a subject on which the other fellows refused to talk.



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